

# ENVIRONMENT



“Children are  
made readers on the  
laps of their parents.”

Emilie Buchwald

## ESCAPADE IN LITERACY!

### Welcome

Dear Parent(s)/Guardians:

Literacy is everywhere, not just in school. Therefore, it is important to foster literacy development at home. By reading to/with your child at home, you are reinforcing this message and contributing to your child's literacy success. Furthermore, this Literacy Kit about the environment was created to help you and your child enjoy reading and learning together.

Start your learning adventure by reading some books with your child about this popular topic. Then explore the topic with three activities. Enclosed you'll find what you need:

- >> two books to share with your child;
- >> three related activities;
- >> Parent Instructional Booklet; and
- >> short survey to tell me if you enjoyed using this kit.

When you've finished with this Literacy Kit, please return it along with the completed survey to school.

We hope you'll enjoy reading and learning together!

- CSC & St. Bernard School

# Literacy Kit #1

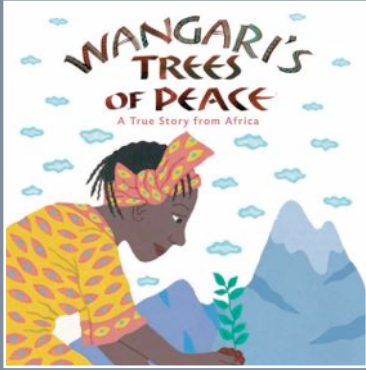


Reading  
Level:  
Junior

## CONTENTS OF LITERACY KIT:

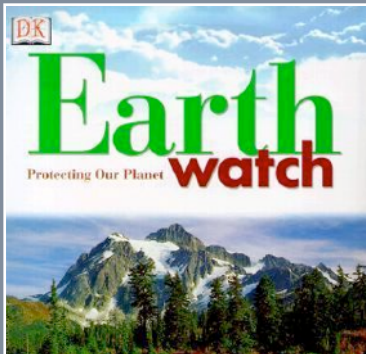
- two non-fiction books;
- instructions;
- three theme related activities;
- supplies for creative activity;
- bookmark with a list of similar themed book titles; and
- parent feedback survey.

## FEATURED BOOKS



### Wangari's Tree of Peace: A True Story From Africa (2008)

As a young girl in Kenya, Wangari is surrounded by trees. But when she gets older, she sees the trees being cut down. Wangari is afraid that soon all the forests will be destroyed. So she decides to plant nine seedlings. And as they grow, so do her plans.



### Protecting Our Planet: Earth Watch (2001)

What is going to happen to Planet Earth? Earth Watch explains the issues—from the perils of pollution and global warming to ozone depletion and habitat destruction—and then suggests ways to help. Hands-on experiments show readers how to explore the science behind the facts, while action globes suggest ways to make a difference on a daily basis.

## Instructions:

### Getting ready

1. Before you read the books to your child or have your child read the books to you, be sure to read them yourself. Both books are nonfiction, or informational and true. Reading the books first will give you the “inside scoop” to the twists and turns of the story, the interesting information inside, and the parts of the books that will appeal most to your child.

2. Next, read the three activities to see which of them you think your child will enjoy most, and which one you have the time and materials on-hand to do right away. Chances are, after you or your child read one (or both) of the books, your child may want to do an activity right away.

### Start the fun

3. When you know you’ll have at least enough time to read and talk about one of the books, grab your child and a book, and dive right in. Start by talking about the cover of the book with your child – can he/she guess what it is

about? Have they ever read a book by the same author or illustrator or about the same topic?

Read the book to your child or have them read it to you. Take time to ask and answer questions, explore the pictures, and wonder what will happen next. Read it again, if your child asks you to. Then, try the other book or one of the activities.

4. Feel free to pick and choose from the activities, or change them to suit your child’s interests. Read the books again over the next few days and try different activities. Most important: have fun!

### When you’re done...

5. Complete the survey and return it with the Literacy Kit to your child’s school.

Make the most of the excitement the books create, and try some hands-on learning. Exploring new ideas alongside you lets your child see you learning – and reading – too, and gives your child personal experiences to support his/her growing knowledge.

“A book should  
teach us to enjoy life,  
or to endure it.”  
~ Samuel Johnson ~





# ACTIVITY #1: PAPER BAG TREES<sup>1</sup>

*It takes years for a real tree to grow from a seed, but in a few minutes, you can make your own tree out of paper!*

## Supplies

- >> small paper bag – the size of a bag for a lunch
- >> newspaper or scrap paper
- >> scissors
- >> glue
- >> green tissue paper or white paper and green crayon or marker

## Instructions

1. While the bag is still folded shut, cut strips down from the top about 1/3 of the way down the bag to make 1/2 inch wide fringe.
2. Carefully open up the bag and put wadded up newspaper or scrap paper in the bottom 1/3. This will be the base of your tree (roots and lower trunk).
3. Grab the bag in the middle – with the paper-filled base below, and the fringe above your hand – and twist the middle part to make the trunk. The fringe will spread out a little.

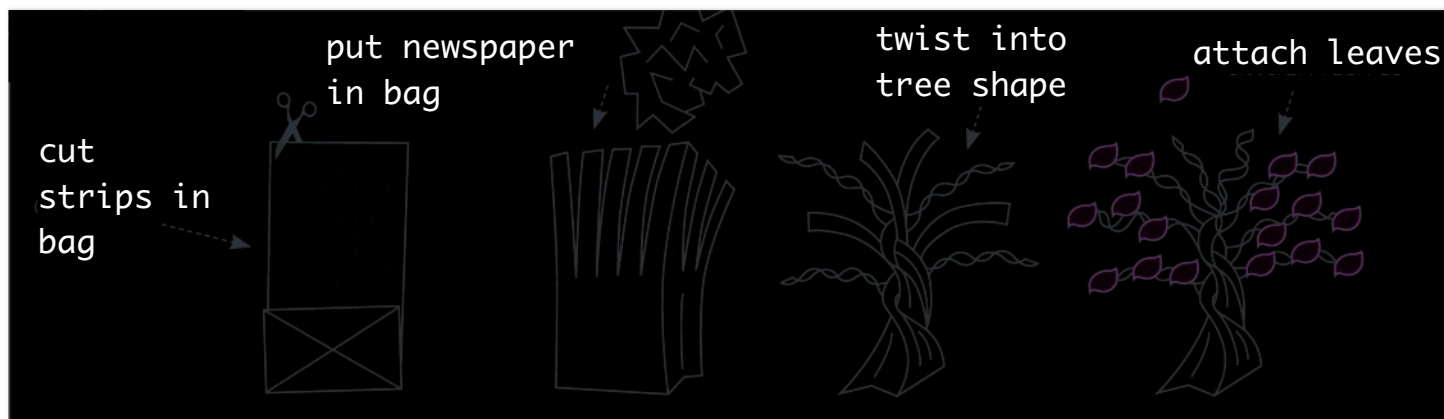
4. Grab a few pieces of the fringe that are close together and twist them together, making a branch. Repeat with the rest of the fringe to make more branches.
5. Glue small bits of green tissue or colored paper on to the branches to cover them with leaves.

**Variation** If you don't have a paper bag, your child can draw a trunk and branches on paper and add leaves – either by gluing on leaves or making green finger prints with an ink pad or finger paint.

You can use yellow, red, brown, or orange paper for Fall.

## Talk with your child about what trees do for our environment:

- >> Trees provide habitats – food and shelter for many animals, birds, and fungi;
- >> Trees clean the air and provide shade;
- >> Trees protect the soil by preventing erosion;
- >> Trees provide food, wood, and paper for people too; and
- >> They are fun to climb!



For more information on Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement go to:  
<http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/>



1 Reading Rockets. "Reading Rockets: Family Literacy Bags: Adventures in Reading." *Reading Rockets: Reading Comprehension & Language Arts Teaching Strategies for Kids*. 2008. Web. 09 Sept. 2010. <<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/27935>>.

## ACTIVITY #2:

# DIRTY-AIR DETECTORS<sup>2</sup>

**Just as you can't see air, you often can't see the pollution in it. How clean is the air you're breathing?**

### What you need:

- Several plastic drinking glasses, well washed and dried
- Petroleum jelly
- A magnifying glass
- A notebook and pen or pencil
- The same number of large empty tin cans as drinking glasses, tops and bottoms removed
- Masking tape

### What to do

1. Decide where you and your child want to test for air pollution. Choose a variety of sites, including some you think are pretty clean (e.g., you and your child's room, your yard, a park), some you think are dirty (e.g., near the highway), and some in between (e.g., a city street).
2. Ask your child to help you smear the outside of one of the glasses with petroleum jelly and examine it with the magnifying glass. In a notebook, ask your child to write down what they see. Remember you need to know what a clean glass looks like so that you can compare your findings with it later.
3. Put the glass at your first test spot. Label it with a piece of masking tape stuck to the inside. Cover the glass with a can. The can will keep out most dust from the ground that would confuse the results. Now you have your first detector.
4. Make the rest of your detectors and put them at your test sites. Be sure to label each detector with the name of the

site. Try to find spots where they'll be protected from rain, as rain will wash away the evidence.

5. Check the detectors every day for a week and have your child record any changes in the notebook.
6. Collect the detectors at the end of the week and examine them carefully with your magnifying glass. Discuss with your child their observations. Do they see much difference between the glasses? Have they caught any strange-looking particles or specks? Are there any surprises?
7. Here's a rough pollution guide: Mark a 0.5 cm square on each collector and count the number of particles you see. If there are around 15, the site is probably fairly clean. However, if there are 100 or more, try not to breathe too deeply in that area!

### Additional Ideas

For a permanent record, collect 2 or 3 leaves from each test site in labeled plastic bags. At home, ask your child to help you press a strip of clear tape against each leaf on both the top and underneath sides. Any particles will stick to the tape. Remove the pieces of tape, put them in the notebook, and label them with the site names. Ask your child if they notice any differences between these results and those from the glass detectors?



<sup>2</sup> Suzuki, David T., and Kathy Vanderlinden. *Eco-fun: Great Experiments, Projects, and Games for a Greener Earth*. Vancouver: Greystone, 2001. 20-21. Print.

# ACTIVITY #3<sup>3</sup>

## Reducing Waste: Litter-Free Lunches

*environment and the  
environment of the future*

number of leftover waste items in your lunches?



**Take up the  
challenge and  
go litterless!**

**Did you know that every school lunch creates an average of 31 kg (67 lbs) of trash per school year? That means, just one average-size school creates over 18, 144 kg (40,000 lbs) of lunch waste a year! By reducing the number of items in your lunch that must be thrown out, or only using those that can be eaten, reused, recycled, or composted, you can:**

- **Prevent pollution**
- **Conserve natural resources such as coal, oil, natural gas, and trees**
- **Save energy**
- **Reduce the need for disposal**
- **Be an environmental steward and make a difference in your**

### How much waste in your lunch?

If both you and your child carry packed lunches to work/school, do you know the impact those lunches have to the environment. With your child, conduct a survey (make a table such as Figure 1, below, to collect your data) of your lunches to see which items in your lunches were reusable, recyclable, compostable, or waste. Discuss the results with your child and talk to him/her about why it is important to reduce the amount of waste we produce. (i.e., talk about where waste goes and the impact large amounts of waste can have on landfills.). Next, ask him/her to brainstorm/think of ways that you can reduce the number of leftover items in your lunches which appear in the waste column and put their ideas to practice. To see how well you and your child have done at reducing your amount of leftover waste, repeat the survey and compare it to your previous results. Did you and your child meet your goal of significantly reducing the

### Environmental Key Terms

- **Compostable:** An item that can be placed into a composition of decaying biodegradable materials, and eventually turn into a nutrient-rich material. It is almost synonymous with "biodegradable," except it is limited to solid materials and does not refer to liquids.
- **Reusable:** An item that can be used again or more than once.
- **Recyclable:** The ability to be convert from waste into a reusable material.
- **Waste:** An item that is eliminated or discarded as no longer useful or required after the completion of a process.

### Ways to Reduce Waste<sup>4</sup>

1. **Reduce the amount of packaging needed.** When planning your packed lunches, instead of buying 12 individually wrapped cookies, buy one larger bag of cookies and divide it into serving sized portions in reusable containers.
2. **Use Reusable plastic containers** to store cookies, chips, just about anything else you can find in a packed lunch. These containers can be brought home, washed, and used again.
3. **Always recycle** the aluminum cans, glass bottles, #1 and #2 plastic bottles and containers, and tetra packages found in your packed lunch.

**Figure 1: Sample table for collecting results of lunch survey.**

REUSABLES	RECYCLABLE	COMPOSTABLE	WASTE
1 plastic container	1 can of soda	1 banana peel	packaging for cookies
			packaging for chips
Totals: 1	1	1	2

### Other Recommended Books

*Where Does Garbage Go?*  
Revised edition by Paul  
Showers (A Let's-Read-  
And-Find-Out Science  
book)

*Recycle!: A Handbook for  
Kids* by Gail Gibbons

*Let's Recycle!* by Anne  
L. Mackenzie

3 Adapted from: US Environmental Protection Agency. "Pack A Waste-Free Lunch | Resources for Waste Education | US EPA." *US Environmental Protection Agency*. Web. 10 Sept. 2010. <<http://www.epa.gov/wastes/education/lunch.htm>>.

4 The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "Protect Our Ocean Activity Book: Be an Ocean Guardian." *The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*. Web. 08 Sept. 2010. <[http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/marinedebris101/WYCD\\_student.html](http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/marinedebris101/WYCD_student.html)>.

5 Reading Rockets. Environment: Adventures in Reading: Family Literacy Bags from Reading Rockets." *Reading Rockets: Reading Comprehension & Language Arts Teaching Strategies for Kids*. Web. 09 Sept. 2010. <<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/27935>>.